

# Summary of Research About the Superkids Reading Program Effectiveness Studies

Rowland Reading Foundation is committed to undertaking large-scale, reliable research about its reading program, Superkids®. This brochure summarizes research conducted to date.



ROWLAND READING FOUNDATION

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## Introduction

This brochure presents results from ongoing research into the effectiveness of the Superkids Reading Program. Since its inception, Rowland Reading Foundation, the publisher of Superkids, has been strongly committed to research. To date, Superkids research has been conducted in schools in nearly every region of the United States and with every major student group. This large body of evidence confirms that Superkids is highly effective in improving reading achievement for children of all backgrounds in all types of schools.

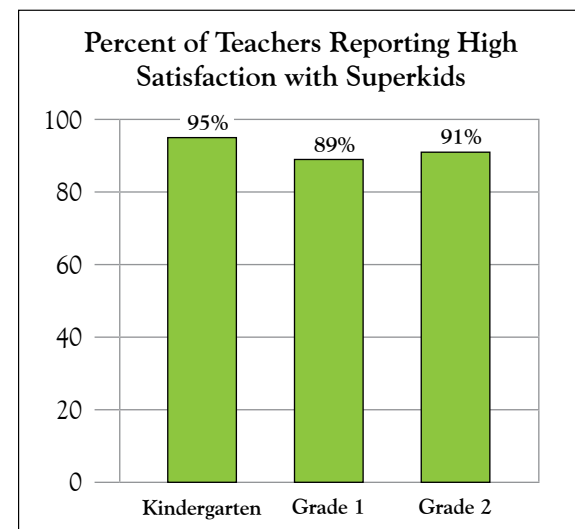
### About Rowland Reading Foundation

Rowland Reading Foundation was established in 2003 with a single focus: teaching children to read by the end of second grade. The Foundation publishes Superkids, a K–2 reading program that is closely aligned with the Common Core State Standards. More information about the Foundation and the Superkids Reading Program can be found on our website: [superkidsreading.org](http://superkidsreading.org).

## Effectiveness Research

### 1. Teachers Give Superkids Top Ratings

In May 2011, Rowland Reading Foundation conducted an online survey of 691 teachers who used the Superkids program as their core reading curriculum in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade. For analysis, the Foundation sent the data to Dr. Walter Heinecke of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Dr. Heinecke concluded: **“The results clearly indicate that the teachers using the Superkids program are extremely satisfied with the program. They consistently reported that the Superkids characters engage the children in the reading program and help to connect all of the components of the program, thus making it effective for teaching reading.”**



#### Key findings

- 88% of the teachers who reported that they've used programs other than Superkids say Superkids is more effective than those programs.
- 96% of respondents said they would recommend Superkids to colleagues.
- On a 5-point scale, with 5 the highest, teachers rated Superkids:
  - 4.5 for its effectiveness teaching students how to read
  - 4.5 for its effectiveness motivating students to learn
  - 4.5 for ease of use ■

All of the Foundation's research is available by calling Rowland Reading Foundation at 866-370-READ or by visiting us online at [superkidsreading.org](http://superkidsreading.org).

### 2. Superkids Produces Superior Results in Two Large-Scale Treatment/Control Studies

The Superkids program was tested in two large-scale, national quasi-experiments, one by Dr. Geoffrey Borman, professor at the University of Wisconsin, and the other by Dr. Jerome D'Agostino, associate professor at The Ohio State University.

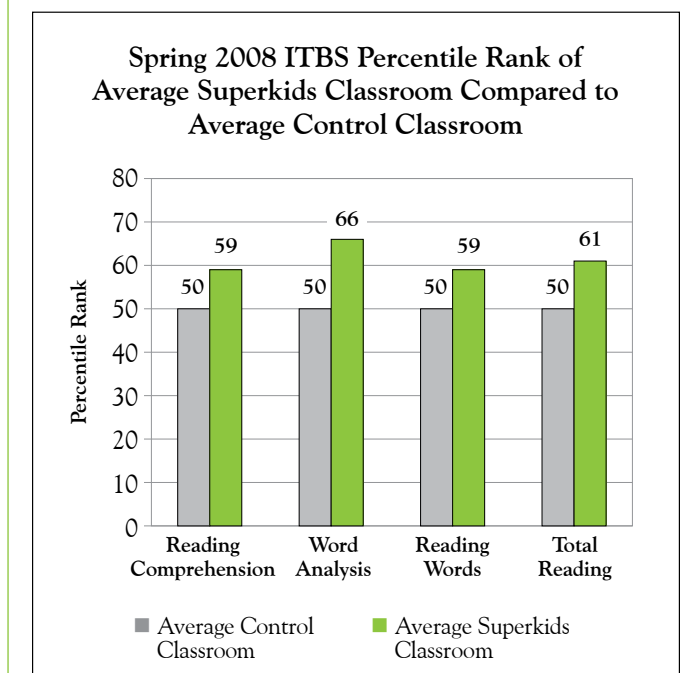
In Dr. Borman's study, 23 kindergarten classrooms that used Superkids as their core reading curriculum were compared to 20 classrooms in the same schools that used traditional basal reading programs during the 2006–07 school year. These schools were located in six states in different regions of the country. The 390 students in the Superkids classrooms were very similar to the 360 students in the control classrooms in terms of demographic characteristics, their teachers' experience, and baseline reading achievement. The only meaningful difference between the two groups of classrooms was the reading program used. Students were tested at the beginning of the school year and again at the end of the school year with the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT). Test results showed that the Superkids students' performance on the end-of-year test was superior to the control group's in all reading domains tested. Effect sizes ranged from 0.11 to 0.25\*.

**“Quantitative studies of published reading programs using such a broad national sample of schools, classrooms, teachers, and students are rare,” said Dr. Borman. “These results bear serious consideration by any school seeking to improve its reading program. This study demonstrates the potential for widespread, cost-effective improvement of literacy through the implementation of Superkids.”**

The study conducted by Dr. D'Agostino during the 2007–08 school year also compared Superkids to control classrooms, but in his study the control classrooms were in different schools. His sample consisted of 21 kindergarten classrooms using

Superkids in 11 schools and 22 well-matched classrooms using other reading programs in 11 demographically similar schools. The sample was nationally representative in terms of the percentages of low-income students and students of various racial/ethnic groups. Schools were located in seven states in different regions of the country. The 382 Superkids students and 368 control students were tested at the beginning and end of the year with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Results of Dr. D'Agostino's analysis corroborate the results of Dr. Borman's study. At the end of the school year, Superkids students outperformed control students in four measures of reading skills. Effect sizes were bigger than in Dr. Borman's study, ranging from 0.23 to 0.41. **“These effect sizes are large for whole-classroom programs implemented for a full school year,” Dr. D'Agostino said. “The effect sizes mean that the average classroom using Superkids performed from 9 to 16 percentiles higher than the average control classroom after one year of the Superkids program.” ■**



\* Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M., “Student and Teacher Outcomes of The Superkids Quasi-Experimental Study,” *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14 (2009): 207–225.

### 3. Superkids: More Effective, Efficient, and Less Costly

Title I is a federal program that targets funds to low-income children. Since its beginning in 1965, hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on Title I. Tennessee Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) was a four-year experiment that tested the effect of reducing class sizes from 25 students to 15 in grades K–3. The cost of reducing class sizes to the levels used in Tennessee Project STAR was estimated to be \$1,800 per student per year.

#### Superkids: More Cost Effective than STAR

In Dr. Geoffrey Borman's national study (see previous page), he compared the Superkids's effect sizes to those for the above two programs. He found that the Superkids's effect sizes, which ranged from 0.11 to 0.25 in his study, were comparable to those from Tennessee Project STAR, which were 0.11 to 0.22. In another national study by Dr. Jerome D'Agostino (see previous page), the Superkids's effects sizes (0.23 to 0.41) were larger than Tennessee Project STAR's. **In other words, the Superkids program, with a cost of about \$50 per student per year, produced larger effects on student achievement than Tennessee Project STAR, with an estimated cost of \$1,800 per student per year.**

#### Superkids: Results Double Title I's

Dr. Borman also found that the Superkids's effect sizes were larger than the average effect (0.11) achieved by Title I programs across 29 years of federal evaluations. **In fact, the average effect size from Dr. Borman's and Dr. D'Agostino's studies was double that of Title I.**

#### Superkids: More Efficient in Less Teaching Time

In addition to test data, Drs. Borman and D'Agostino analyzed teacher-interview responses. Both researchers found that the superior effects of the Superkids program were achieved by

teachers despite the fact that they reported spending less time per day teaching language arts than control teachers (105 minutes compared to 132 minutes in Dr. Borman's study and 99 minutes compared to 141 minutes in Dr. D'Agostino's study). According to Dr. Borman, **"Superkids appeared to offer a more efficient overall language arts program in that it produced stronger achievement effects, but demanded less overall time to teach."**

In both studies, Superkids teachers also reported spending a greater proportion of their language arts time teaching Superkids than control teachers spent teaching their core reading programs (79% compared to 44% in Dr. Borman's study and 91% compared to 49% in Dr. D'Agostino's study). **"Because the Superkids program integrates reading, writing, spelling, and grammar, teachers likely saw less need to supplement Superkids with other literacy materials, and thereby may have realized important savings both in terms of time and money,"** said Dr. Borman.

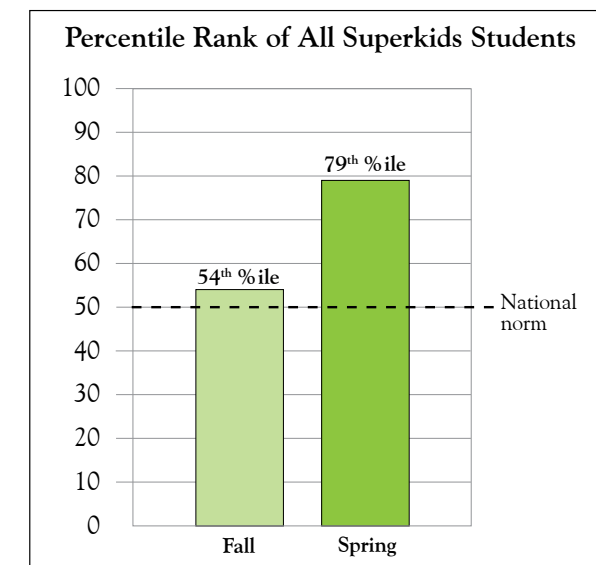
#### Superkids: Greater Teacher Satisfaction

Finally, teachers in both studies reported significantly greater satisfaction with Superkids than control teachers reported with their core reading programs. On a 5-point scale, Superkids teachers in both studies combined reported greater overall satisfaction (4.65 versus 3.85), greater perceived effectiveness (4.74 versus 3.90), greater perceived motivation of students (4.83 versus 3.75), and easier implementation (4.63 versus 3.95) than control teachers.

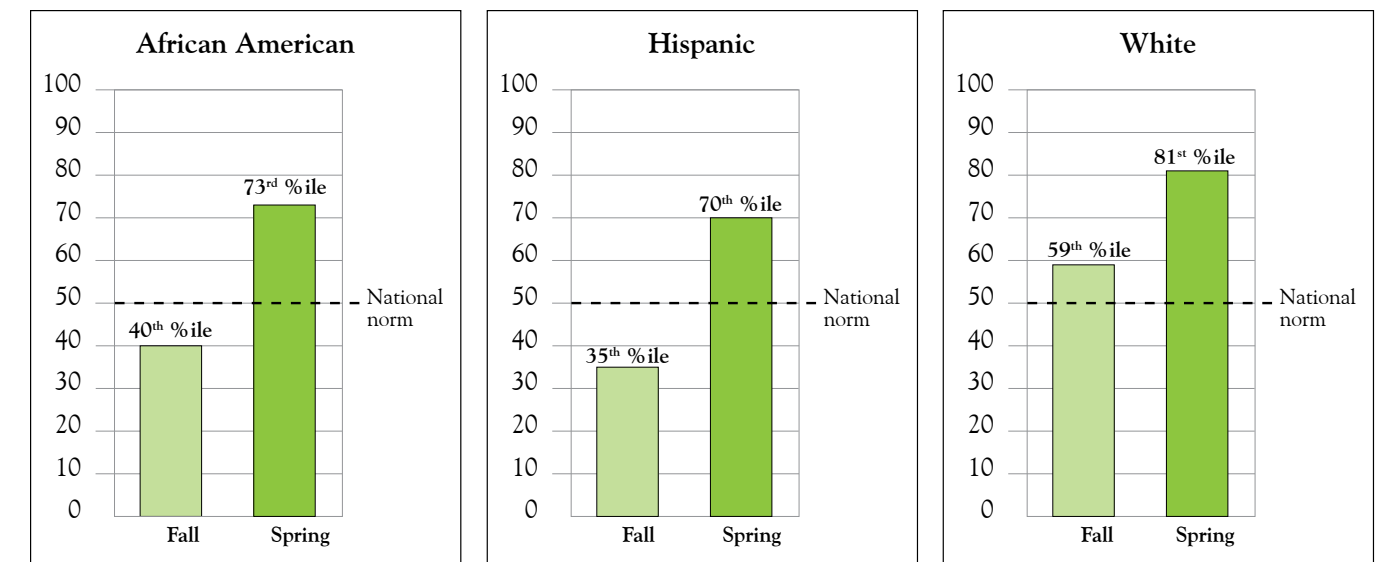
Dr. D'Agostino concluded, **"The evidence . . . indicates that Superkids is a complete program that is easy and efficient to implement, and that produces positive learning outcomes that are most vital for student success."** ■

### 4. 3,200 Students Move from 54<sup>th</sup> to 79<sup>th</sup> Percentile in 1 Year

The Superkids Reading Program was tested in a national trial involving 3,200 kindergarten students in 193 classrooms. These classrooms were in 83 schools in 22 states. The ethnic/racial mix of the student sample (12% African American, 17% Hispanic, 66% White, and 5% other) reflected the nation as a whole. In both years of the study (2006–07 and 2007–08 school years), students took the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT) in the fall and spring. **The results showed that the students started kindergarten on average at the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading compared to children nationally and ended kindergarten on average at the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile. If these students had merely kept pace with students nationally, they would have stayed at the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile at the end of kindergarten, so the 25-point gain is a remarkable result.**



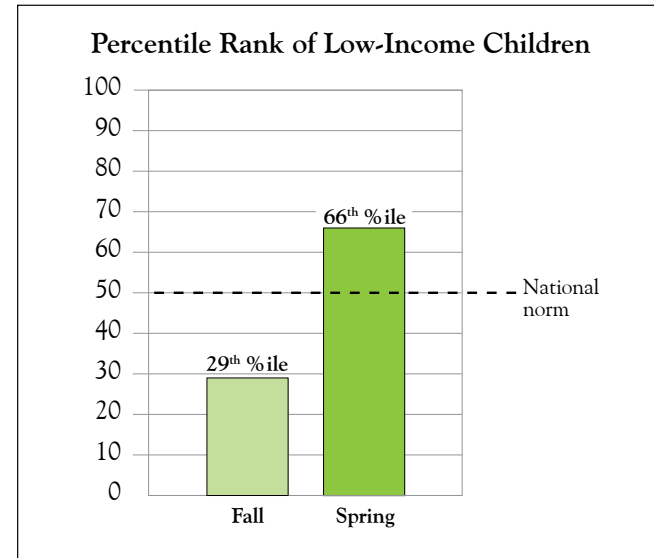
**Students of all ethnicities** made dramatic progress after one year of Superkids instruction. By spring, all students—African American, Hispanic, and White—scored at or above the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile.



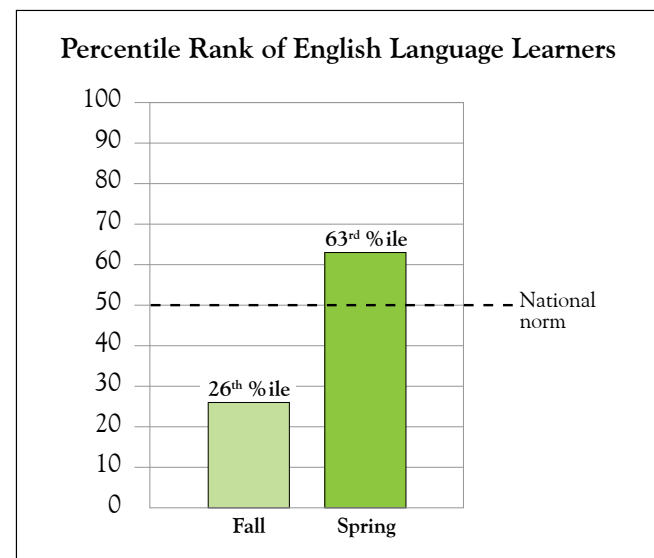
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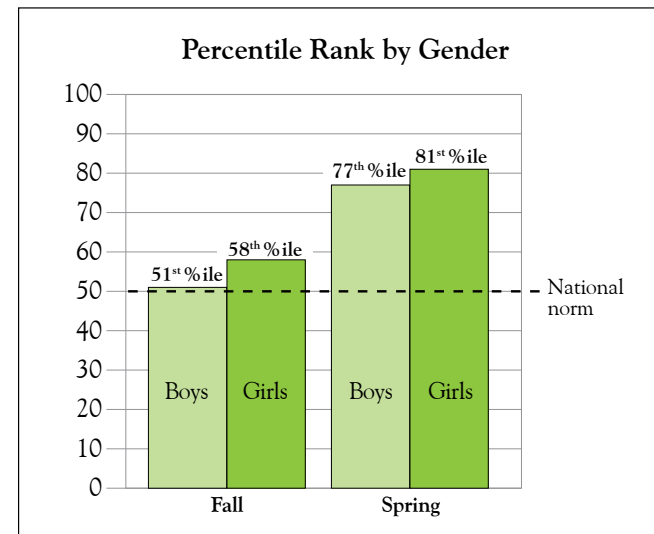
**Low-income children** scored on average at the 29<sup>th</sup> percentile in the fall. In the spring, this group scored at the 66<sup>th</sup> percentile, well above the national norm and a gain of 37 percentile points. Low-income children were 29% of the population tested.



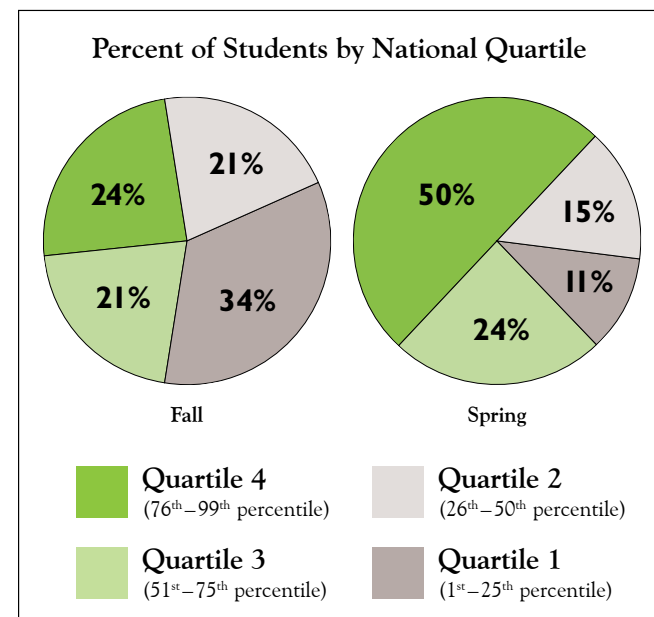
**English language learners** scored on average far below the national norm at the 26<sup>th</sup> percentile in the fall. By spring, this group made striking gains, finishing the year above the national norm at the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile, a gain of 37 percentile points. English language learners were 8% of the population tested, which is about the national average.



The gender gap between boys' and girls' achievement was reduced by nearly half after one year of Superkids instruction. This gender gap in reading is typically observed in the earliest years of school and it grows over time. Educators increasingly believe that it is critical for boys to get a strong start in reading in the primary grades.

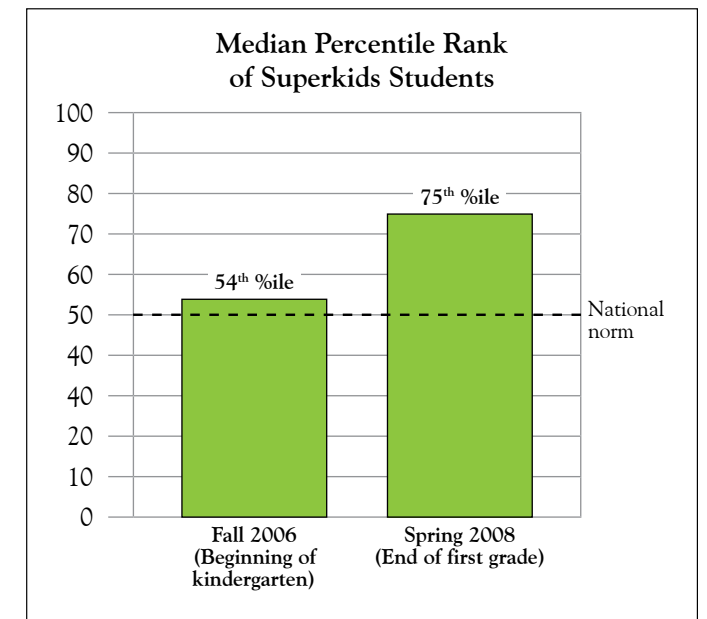


**Students of all abilities** made dramatic gains after only one year of Superkids instruction. On the fall test, 34% of students scored in the lowest quartile. By spring, only 11% of students scored in this quartile. High-achieving students also made gains. By spring, twice as many students—**fully half of all students tested**—scored in the highest quartile. ■



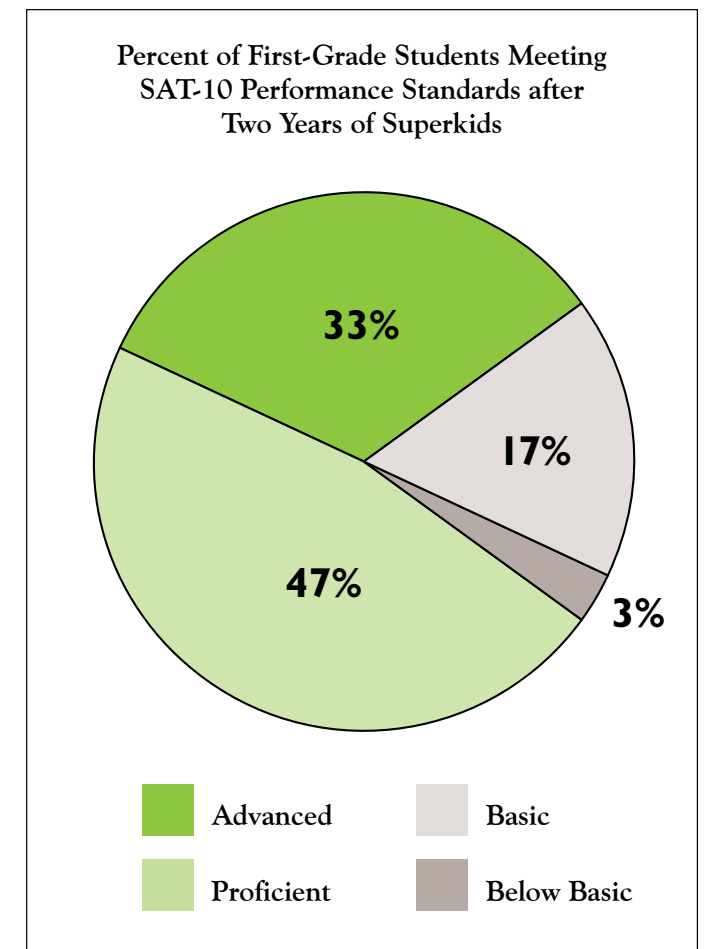
## 5. Two Studies Show Strong Two-Year Impact of Superkids

The Superkids Reading Program was tested in a national trial involving more than 400 students during their kindergarten and first-grade years. These children were enrolled in 36 classrooms in 18 schools, which were located in Florida, Kentucky, Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, and Wisconsin. **The results showed that students started kindergarten in the 2006–07 school year at the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading compared to children nationally and ended first grade in the 2007–08 school year at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.** If these children had merely progressed as much as children do normally, they would have ended first grade at about the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile, so the 21-point gain is dramatic.



In a separate study, 370 first-grade students in 10 schools took part in a study of the Superkids Reading Program during the 2009–10 school year. Schools were located in Arizona, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin. Students were given the Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT-10) in fall and spring of the school year. About 90% of the students in the study were taught with Superkids in both kindergarten and first grade.

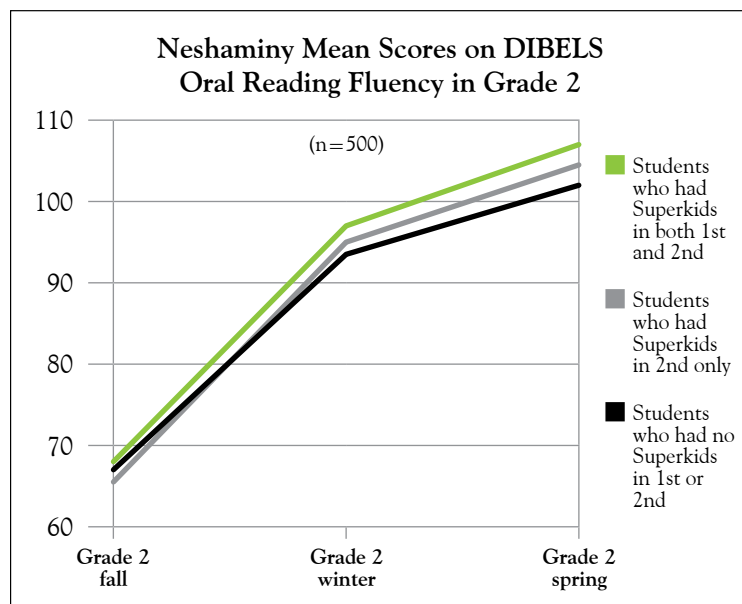
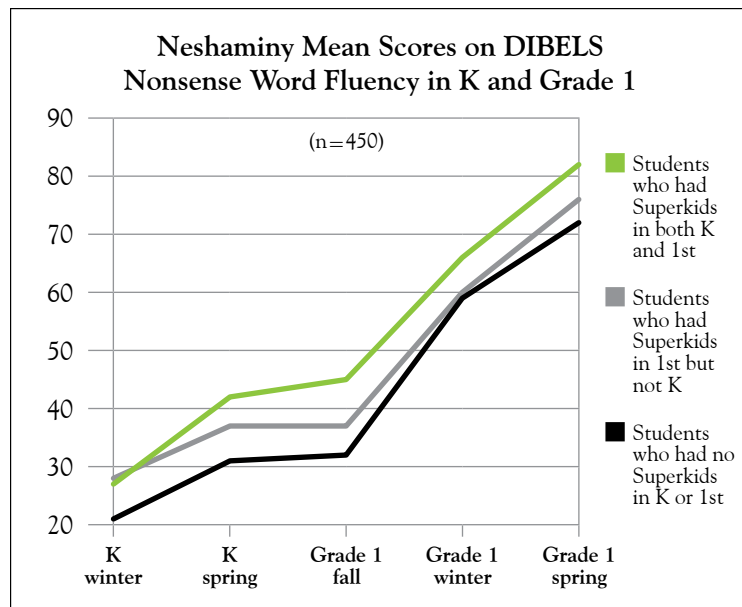
Results of analysis show that, after two years of instruction with the Superkids program, 80% of first graders achieved at the Proficient or Advanced levels of the SAT-10. So the students in this study were well on their way to entering the intermediate grades with a solid foundation. This is important because two-thirds of American fourth graders read below the Proficient level, according to the 2009 Nation's Report Card from the U.S. Department of Education. Solid literacy instruction in the primary grades is the way to prevent reading failure and ensure academic success in the years beyond. ■





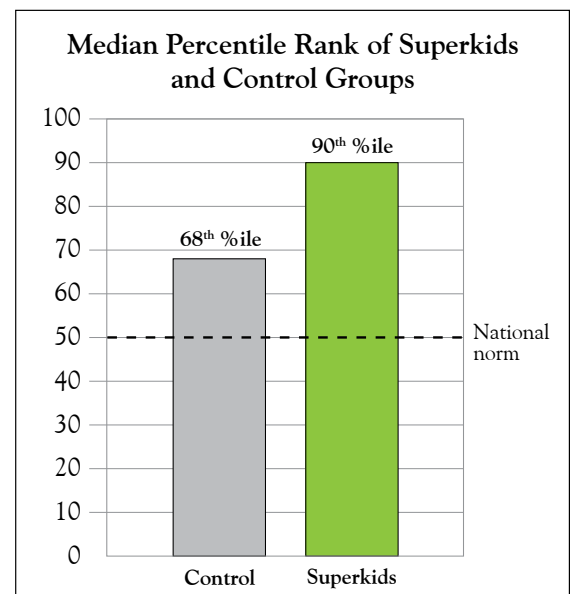
## 6. Growth Rates Triple on DIBELS

Neshaminy School District in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, began implementing Superkids districtwide in all 90 K–2 classrooms in nine schools at the start of the 2009–10 school year. After two years of implementation, the district is seeing strong improvements on DIBELS. According to independent analysis of DIBELS data through the 2010–11 school year conducted by Dr. Jerome D’Agostino of The Ohio State University, **“Growth rates on DIBELS are three times what they were before Superkids was implemented.”** Furthermore, as can be seen in the graphs below, the impact of Superkids increases the more exposure students have to it. ■



## 7. Treatment/Control Study by CREP Shows “Extremely Positive Results”

The Center for Research on Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis conducted a quasi-experiment during the 2005–06 school year in two schools in Texas. The sample consisted of 152 children in 8 kindergarten classrooms that used the Superkids as their core reading program and 120 similar students in 7 kindergarten classrooms that used other reading programs (the control group). At the end of the year, researchers administered the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. **According to CREP, “The results were extremely positive favoring the Superkids students.”** The median percentile rank for the Superkids students was 90, while the median percentile rank of the control group was 68. Effect sizes ranged from 0.27 to 0.46. ■



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For more information or additional copies of this report, please contact us at:

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